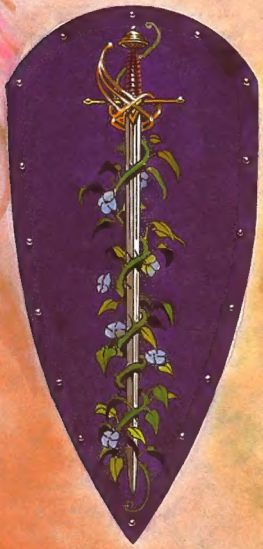

THE SISTERHOOD

WRITTEN·BY·CHRISTY MARX
ILLUSTRATED·BY·PETER LEDGER

THE SISTERHOOD OF STEEL

BORONWË: DAUGHTER OF DEATH

ECLIPSE GRAPHIC ALBUM #13

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DEDICATION: To our cats—Zorro, Achilles, Ginger, Sabina, Phantom, Velvet, Ventura and Querida—for their diligence in making sure that Peter's art and my Microsoft Mouse did not float away.

And a special thanks to Mike Vosburg for his contributions to the first Sisterhood of Steel series (and because we suckered him into taking one of our most lunatic kittens).

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the SISTERHOOD of STEEL

ILDANA

ISLAND-FORTRESS
OF THE SISTERHOOD

LEDOUX ©1987

PROLOGUE

BORONWE

DINDRA

THE SISTERHOOD OF STEEL

This is another chapter in the life of BORONWË, a young warrior-woman in the service of the Sisterhood of Steel, a society of female mercenaries.

The Sisterhood is ruled by the MATRIX, a triad which consists of the QUEEN OF SWORDS, the PRINCESS OF SWORDS, and the PRIESTESS OF SWORDS. Their main base and training ground is ILDANA, a fortified island situated at the narrow entrance to an enormous inland sea. However, they have a major outpost in Orange-Phyrus, twin cities which share a single harbor.

GILL

VANDALIS

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

BORONWË: She holds the rank of Sister-Warrior 4th Class. She is 17. Boronwë has been on trial for treason and been acquitted. She's made a serious enemy of Vandalis who attempted to kill her, an attempt that would have succeeded if not for the intervention of the Priestess.

DINDRA: Boronwë's swordmate, also a Warrior 4th Class. She is 17 and has only been Boronwë's swordmate for a few months. At the opening of this story, Boronwë and Dindra await a new field assignment following Boronwë's trial.

GILL: Has just been elected Queen of Swords—the ruler and top-ranking officer of the Sisterhood. Prior to that, she was the Sisterhood's chief Warrior-Negotiator, Commander 1st Class.

VANDALIS: Previously the Princess of Swords, supreme military commander of the Sisterhood. She tried to use Boronwë's trial as a political stepping-stone to the Queen's throne. When this failed, she resigned her position to return to the field as a Commander 1st Class. A new Princess has not yet been chosen.

AMBYRE: Commander 1st Class, one of the top Commanders. She has been Gill's swordmate for many, many years. Known in the field as "The Merry Widowmaker" for her skill with the axe.

GLESPA: Commander 1st Class. She is the oldest surviving Commander still in active service. Her nickname among the Sisters is "The Old Boar."

GREYAN: The Priestess of Swords, mistress of poisons, head of the DAUGHTERS OF DEATH, the shadowy assassination arm of the Sisterhood.

STONE: A senior Daughter of Death. She fancies herself to be Greyan's successor.

FERIN: Previously a Captain 3rd Class of the Sisterhood. Now a prisoner in O'Mah's secret dungeon room.

O'MAH: Hereditary ruler of Orange. Cruel, sly and mad.

ANDRAS: Vicious, self-styled "King" of the Slavers of Glaour. The Glaourans' sole trade is the taking and selling of slaves. They are sworn enemies of the Sisterhood.

BENIGNUS: One of Andras' more brutal sons. Andras has hundreds of sons by his scores of slave-concubines, but favors Benignus because they share the same vile temperament.

AMBYRE

GLESPA

GREYAN

STONE

FERIN

O'MAH

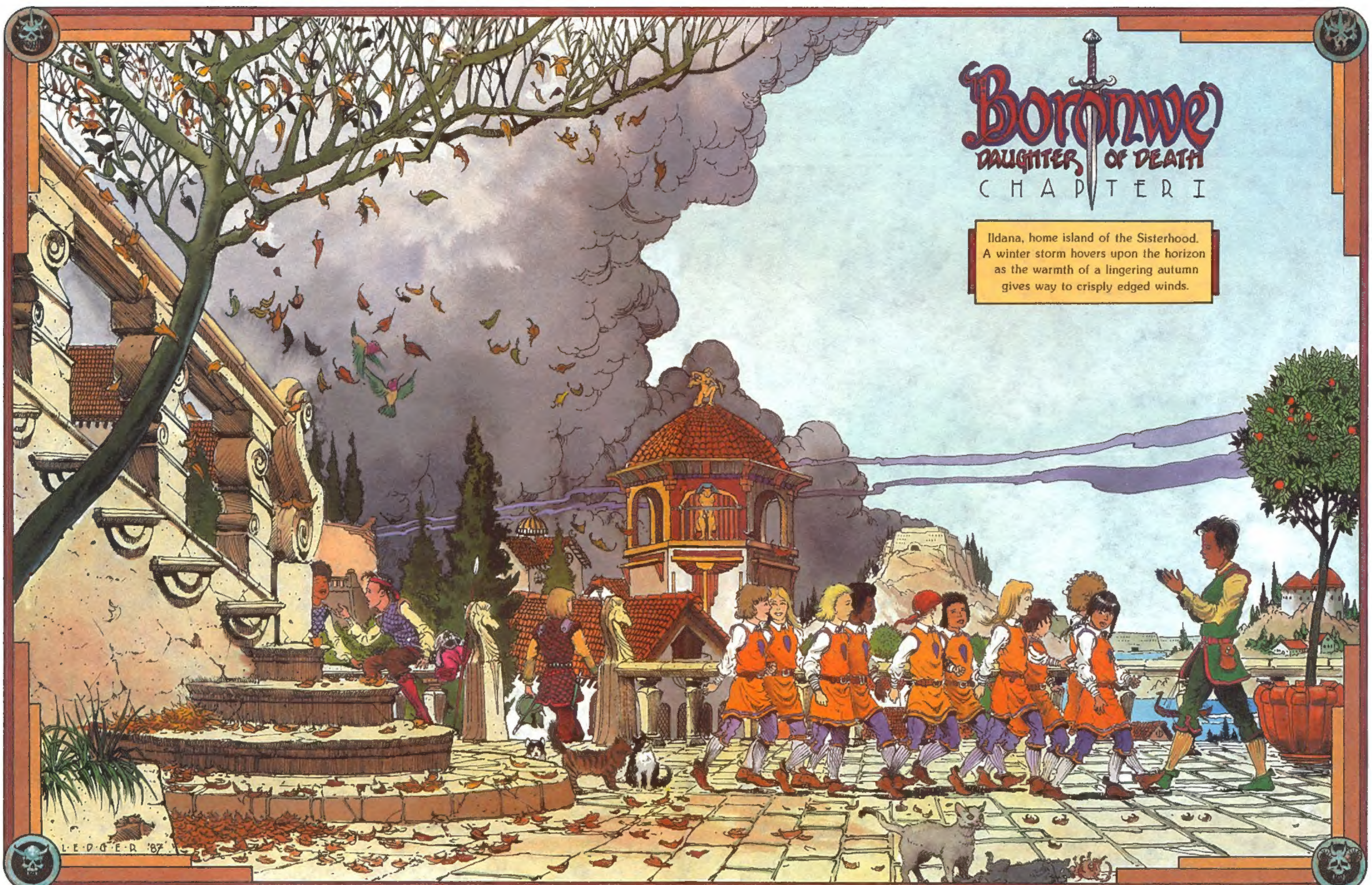
ANDRAS

BENIGNUS

Boronwe
DAUGHTER OF DEATH

CHAPTER I

Ildana, home island of the Sisterhood. A winter storm hovers upon the horizon as the warmth of a lingering autumn gives way to crisply edged winds.



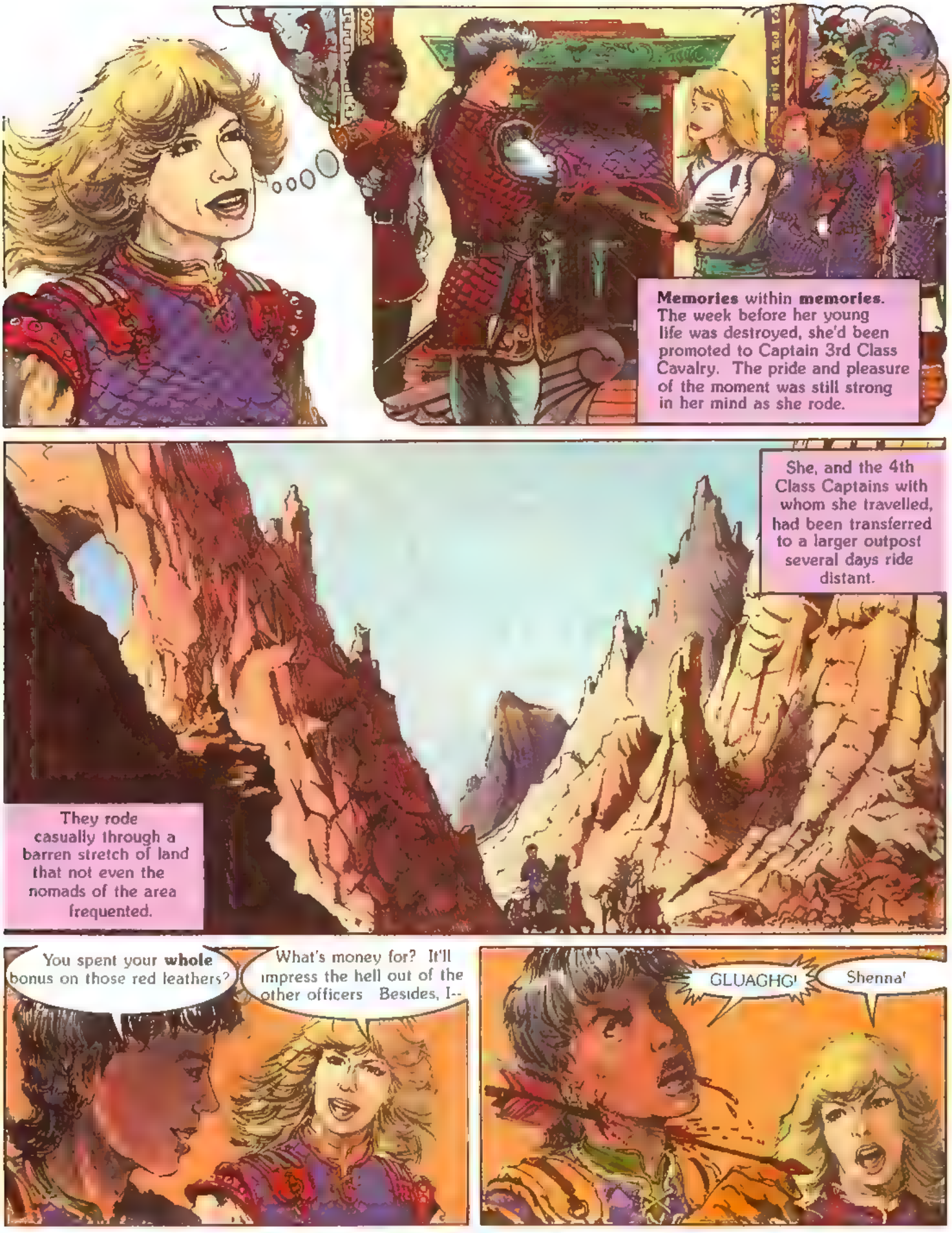
I'm dying! Goddess, help me, I'm dying!
Why is it, Dindra...
...when you're winning, you're fine, but when **I'm** winning, you suffer massive attacks of cramps?
Screw the game! I quit, I give up. I forfeit! You win.
Ooohhhh, I hate being a woman.
Honestly, you make such a fuss....

What would you know? Three days and you're done and you hardly even felt it! I'm just starting. You don't know what it means to really have The Curse, you lucky bitch.
It means I'll be walking guard duty for three days while you're lounging around here moaning.
I have to take these back to the library. Can I bring you anything?
Murphmamuh.
Translate.
Something dirty and sexy. Before I die.
Hah! Not from **this** library.

I'd give a lot to know where Dindra and I will be reassigned.
Knowing my luck, it'll be right under Vandalis' boot.
I doubt if anyone would take my fears seriously. Except maybe the Priestess.
Even Dindra thinks I'm seeing enemies in every shadow--
Sister Boronwë.
A Daughter of Death! What does she want with **me**?
Come with me.
I-I was going--
Leave the scrolls. They'll be taken for you.
The **Priestess** awaits you. Come.

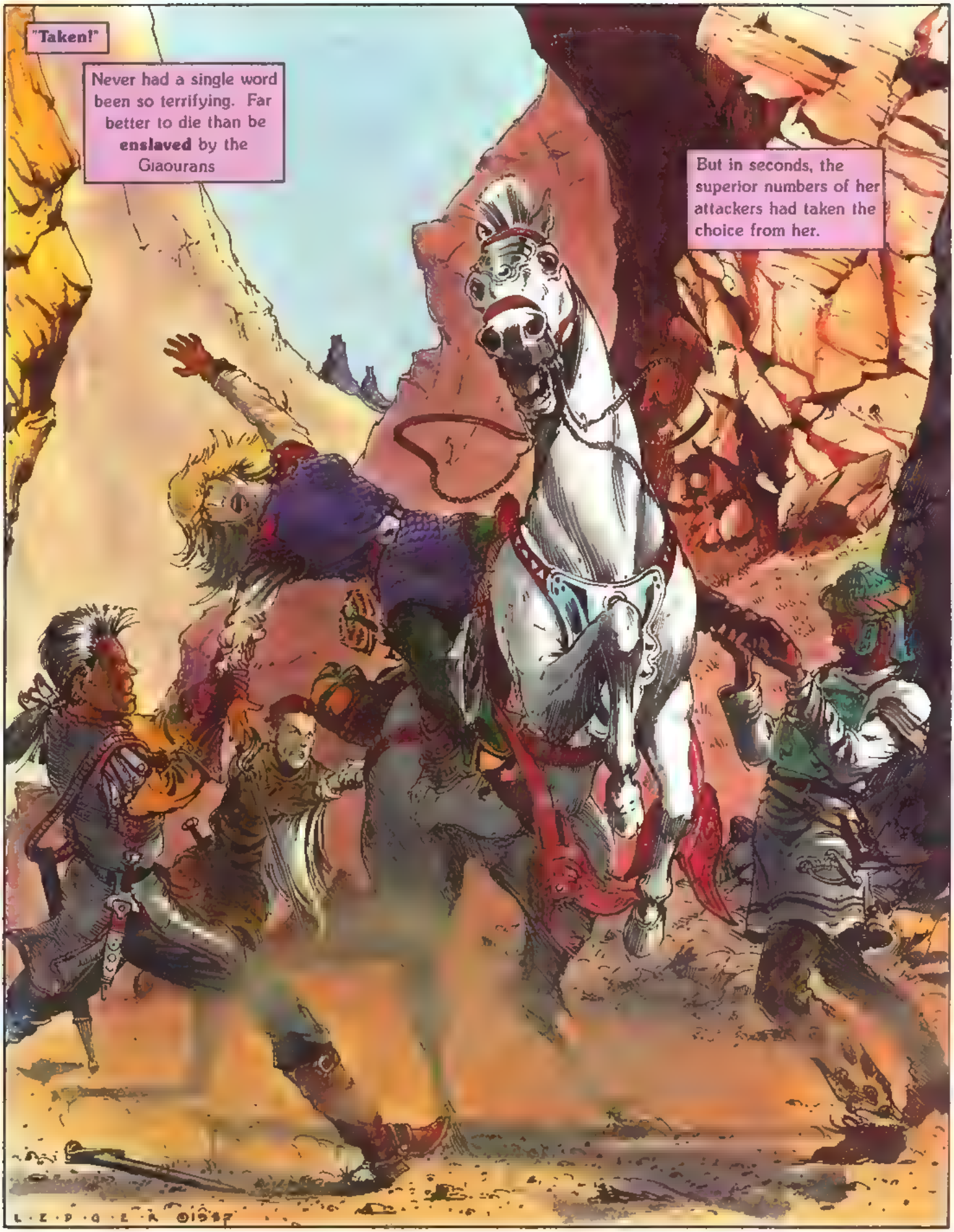
CHAPTER III

Her name is **Ferin**. Her world is dark, cold and foul. Her companions are the vile grey rats of the dungeons of Prince O'Mah and other, even less pleasant things that scuttle and crawl
Deprived of the ability to scream out her horror, Ferin can only gurgle uselessly deep in her throat, as she spends the endless, hopeless days of captivity **remembering** her bright days of freedom when the world was full of sunlight and a hot desert breeze blew in her hair


Memories within **memories.** The week before her young life was destroyed, she'd been promoted to Captain 3rd Class Cavalry. The pride and pleasure of the moment was still strong in her mind as she rode.
She, and the 4th Class Captains with whom she travelled, had been transferred to a larger outpost several days ride distant.
They rode casually through a barren stretch of land that not even the nomads of the area frequented.
You spent your **whole** bonus on those red leathers?
What's money for? It'll impress the hell out of the other officers Besides, I--
GLUAGHG!
Shenna!

Have at them, boys!
The **ambush** by the Giaourans was swift and devastating.
Before Ferin could lay a hand to the hilt of her sword, her Sisters had fallen.

There was nothing left to do save die with spitting courage. It was not the death she had imagined for herself, but then, is death ever what we imagine?
Come on, then, Slaver scum! Have you run out of arrows? Come and kiss my steel, you cowardly bastards!
Make sure the others are dead And this one is to be taken **unharmed**!


"Taken!"
Never had a single word been so terrifying. Far better to die than be **enslaved** by the Giaourans
But in seconds, the superior numbers of her attackers had taken the choice from her.
L·E·D·O·E·A ©1987

CHAPTER III

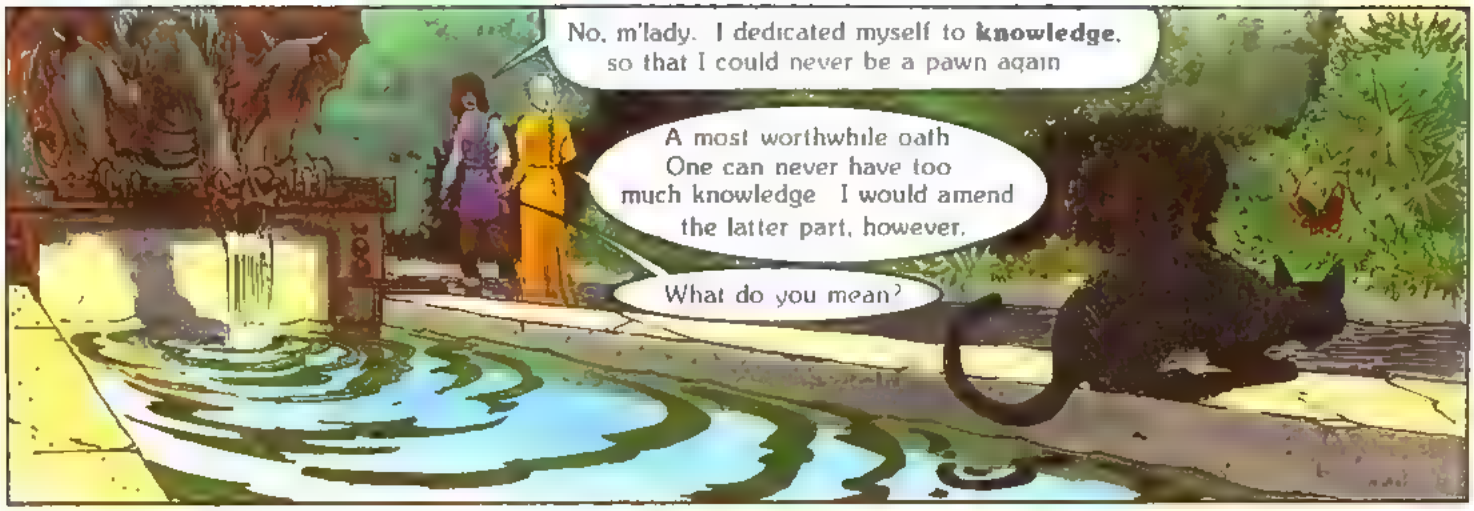
This place can only be the Priestess' **Garden of Death**. I've been left alone with Greyan herself.

I've heard fanciful tales about this garden. But they're true! Every plant I can recognize is **poisonous**.
You are looking well, Boronwe
And you, Priestess. I am honored
I must warn you against touching, smelling or tasting my plants, no matter how pleasant or innocent they appear
I assure you, my Lady. I'll treat them with caution
Much the same as you treat **me**, I note. Walk with me

You've been spending a great deal of time in the library Why?
I've been studying the laws and field regulations
I can't see you trading the sword for the scroll
Oh, no! It's nothing like that I'm looking for legal ways to...to **protect** myself

From Vandalis? You're afraid of falling under her command in the field, of course This is also my fear
It is? Dindra thinks I
Dindra?
My swordmate. She thinks I tremble at phantoms But I've had words with Vandalis since the trial.
Again? Did she threaten you physically?
Well, after my acquittal, Lanna threw a celebration party, but I felt.. I can't explain it exactly. A pull. Something called me back to the cliffs where Vandalis and I fought Vandalis was waiting there
Was she now? Most interesting
She, too, felt compelled to return to this place?
Yes. She said the drug she fed us the first time has created a bond of some kind

It is one property of the bramble flower elixir in its stronger preparations
It can be a mild euphoric or the most lethal of poisons and has many stages in between But go on
So she said that someday she would see me die and she threw a knife at me
Not to hit me, just to **scare** me
And?
I threw it **back** at her
Hahaha!
Marvelous! What did she do?
She **laughed** and went away. Then I swore an oath to the Goddess
Not some terrible oath of bloody vengence, I hope?

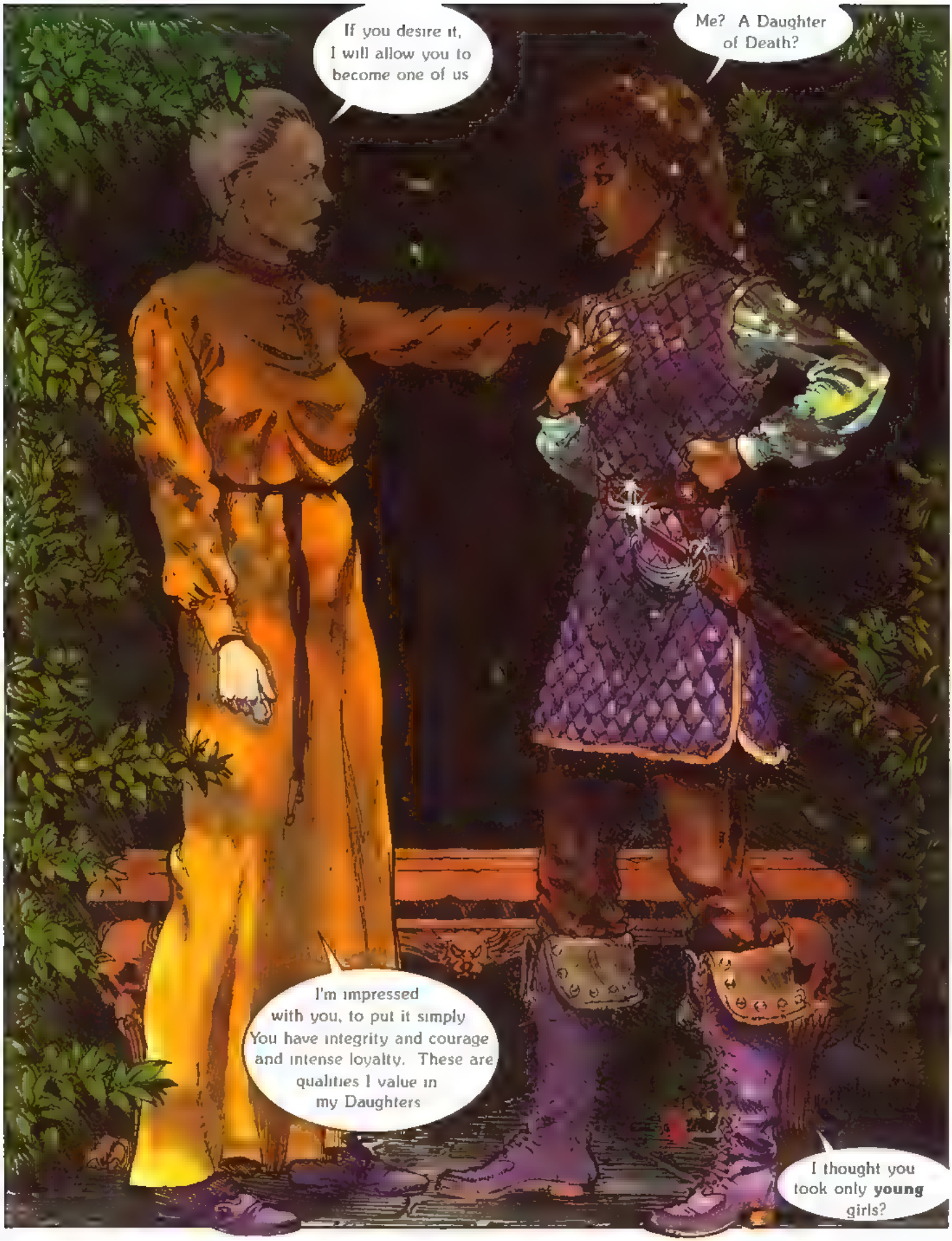

No, m'lady. I dedicated myself to **knowledge**, so that I could never be a pawn again
A most worthwhile oath One can never have too much knowledge I would amend the latter part, however.
What do you mean?

With knowledge, you may perhaps avoid being an **unwitting** pawn But don't scorn the role of pawns, my dear. That was the mistake Vandalis made with you
And what has it gained her? She is no longer Princess of Swords and Gill sits upon the throne

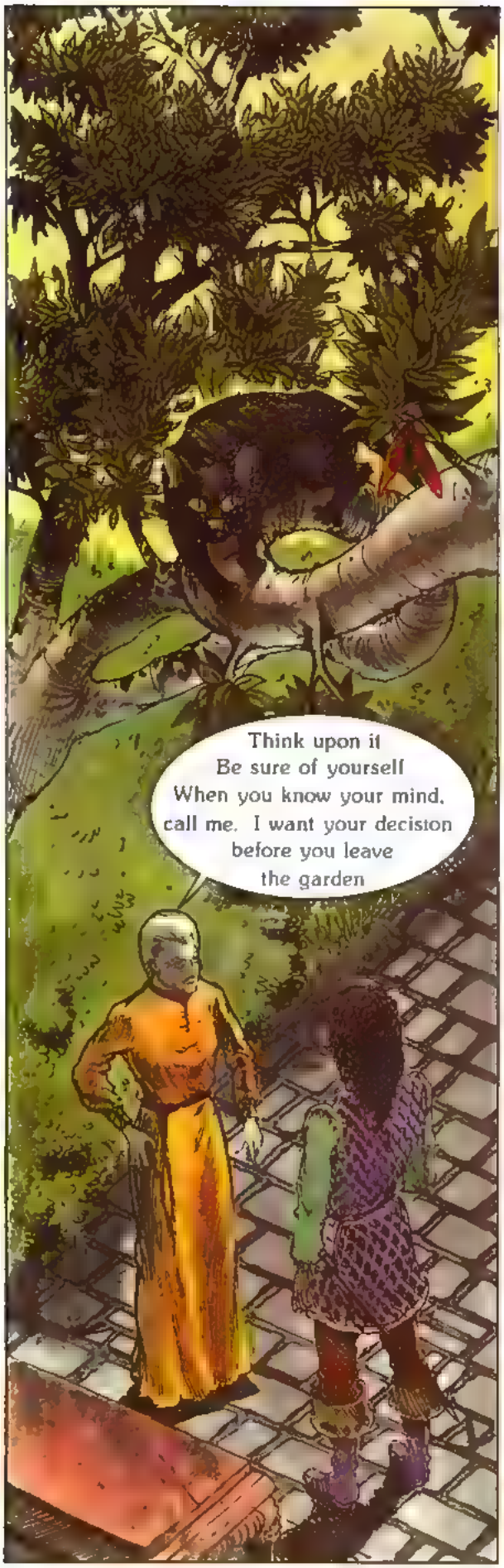
I would almost prefer that she'd kept her title
I would say with certainty she was not She said it was the drug that made her lose control.
In this new encounter with Vandalis, did it strike you that she was again under the influence of the drug?

And you? Have you desired to taste the nectar again?
No Priestess!

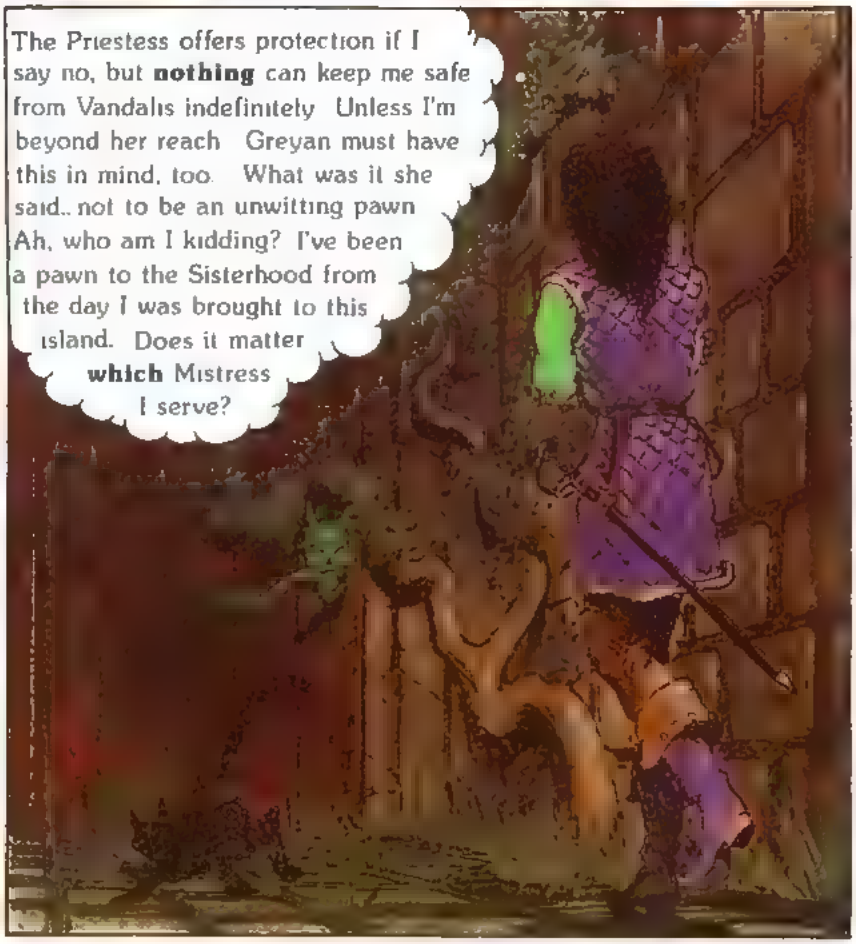
And if you could? With my sanction?
understand
I've given this matter a great deal of thought, Boronwe. I've found no writings by my predecessors of a similar case, so I must act upon my own judgement


If you desire it, I will allow you to become one of us
Me? A Daughter of Death?
I'm impressed with you, to put it simply You have integrity and courage and intense loyalty. These are qualities I value in my Daughters
I thought you took only **young** girls?

Normally, yes You'll have to undergo intensive retraining. And there is the essence of the bramble-flower, which will change many things for you
I know I can see better in the dark now
What? You've noticed this after only one dose?
Yes Is that bad?
Not at all It usually takes more time an **excellent** sign, in fact. It confirms my feeling that you are destined to join us
If I say no
You go your way as freely as you came. I make this offer only **once**, to our mutual advantage
But if you choose to remain as you are, so be it I'll speak to Gili on your behalf about Vandalis

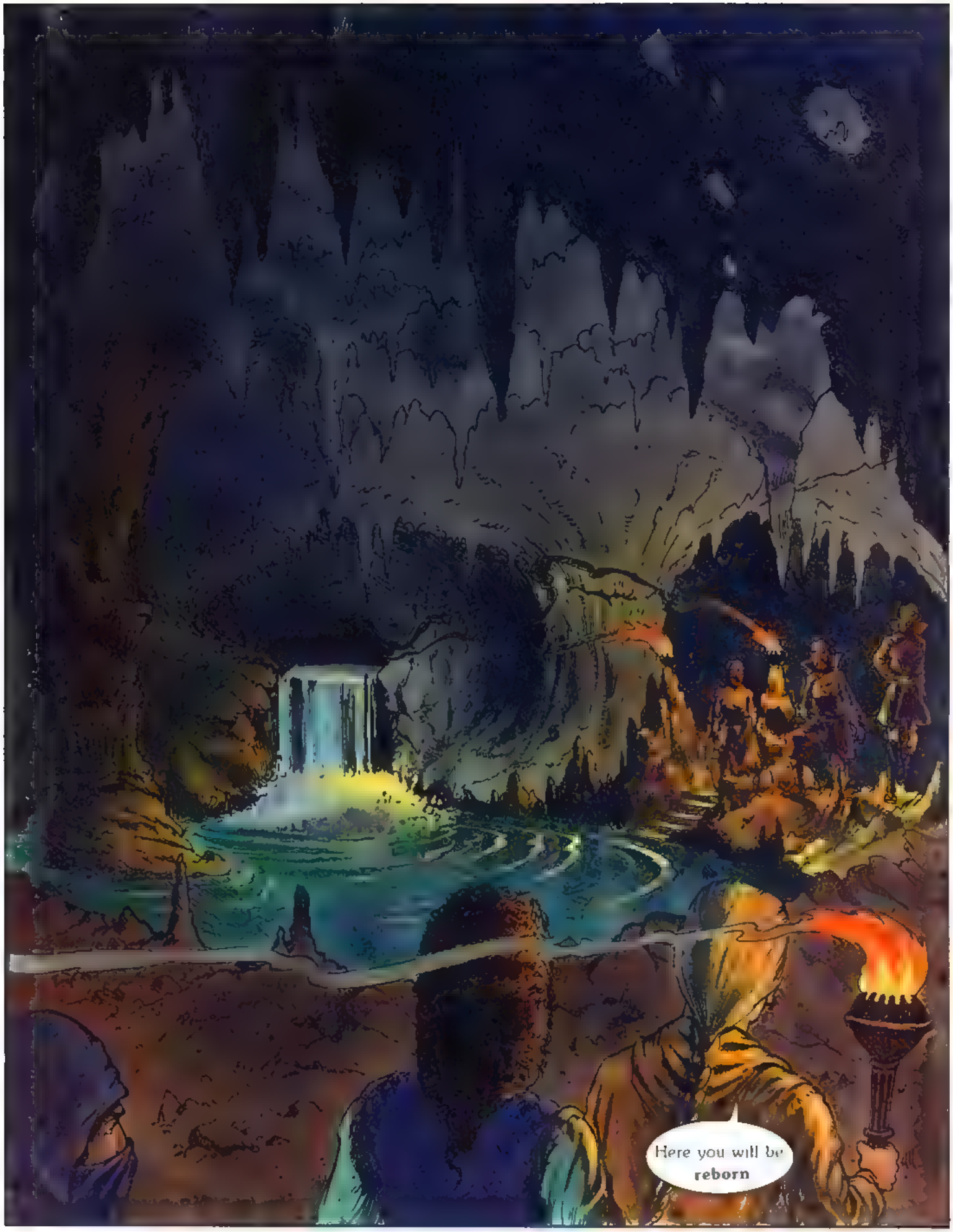

Think upon it
Be sure of yourself
When you know your mind, call me. I want your decision before you leave the garden

Can I do it? Give up the world of light and live in the darkness? Walk under the earth, hide my face and kill in silence? But the things I could learn!
Perhaps the Goddess is testing my oath

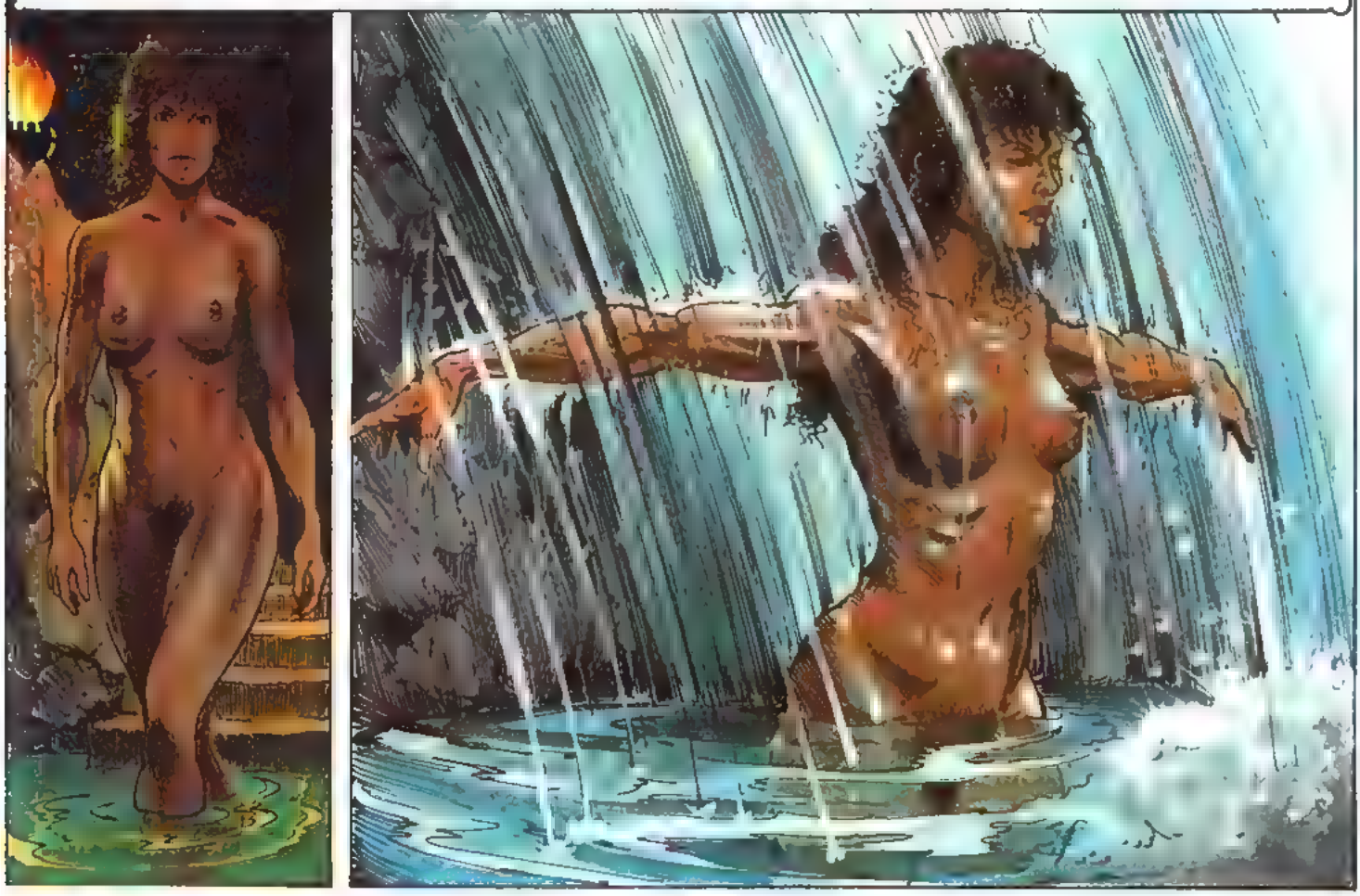

The Priestess offers protection if I say no, but **nothing** can keep me safe from Vandalis indefinitely Unless I'm beyond her reach Greyan must have this in mind, too What was it she said.. not to be an unwitting pawn Ah, who am I kidding? I've been a pawn to the Sisterhood from the day I was brought to this island. Does it matter **which** Mistress I serve?

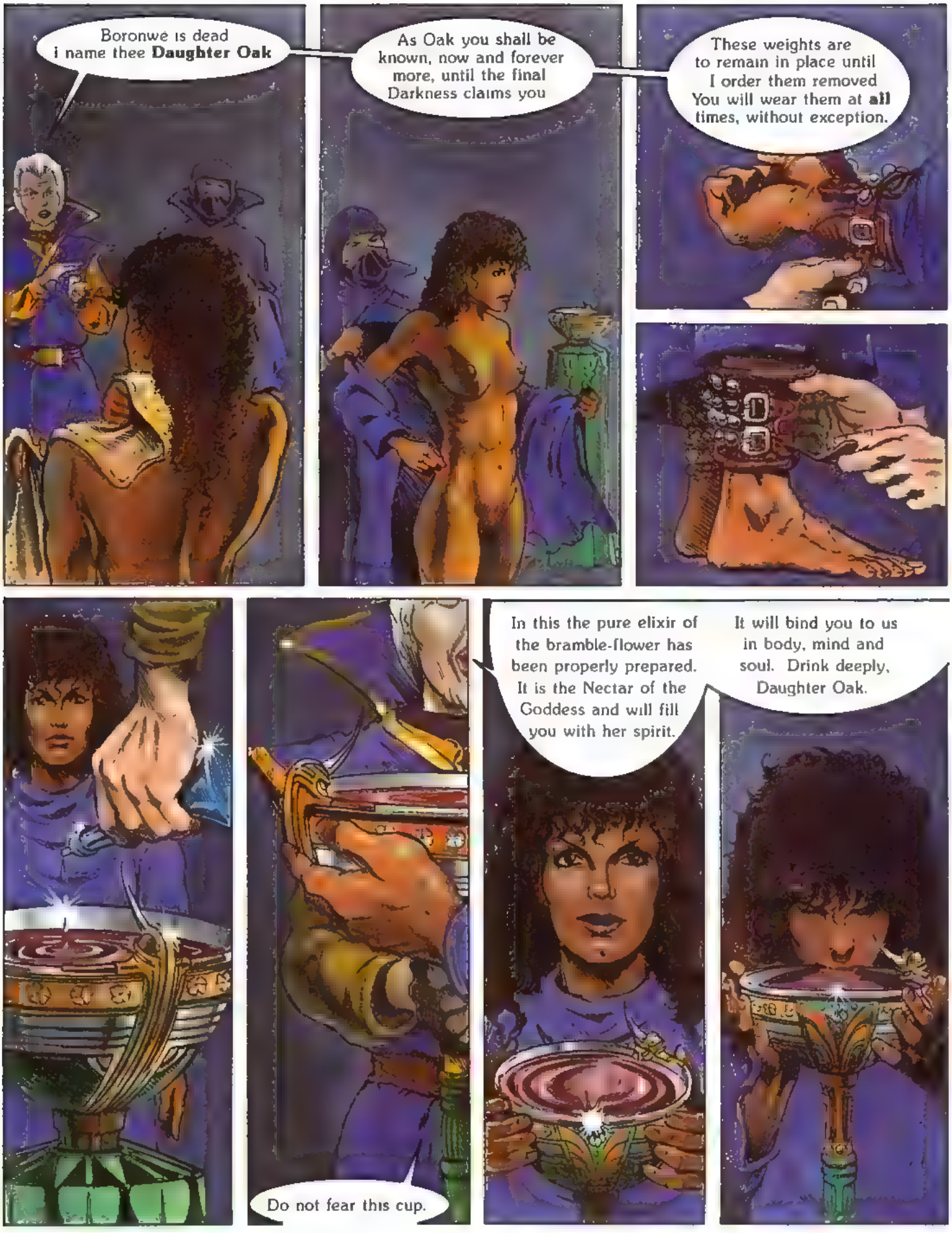
I accept
You are most wise Follow me
May I say good-bye to my swordmate and collect my things?
When you pass this door, you enter my world, my domain My will is your will You may turn aside now, but once you cross this threshold...
....you say farewell to all that you have known.

How silent and vast it is
My own breath is like a thunderclap in my ears
This is the Womb of the Goddess


Here you will be reborn

The Daughters' solemn chant echoes around me Goddess, virgin in blood Goddess, mother of all. Goddess, healer of the earth Goddess, protector of women. Goddess, slayer of enemies Goddess, provider of abundance Goddess, in whom we are born with new senses Accept this woman as your daughter Grant her your wisdom, grant her your strength, grant her your protection for as long as her heart and soul are true. And if ever there is evil in her heart, or betrayal in her soul, strike her dead!




Boronwé is dead
I name thee **Daughter Oak**
As Oak you shall be known, now and forever more, until the final Darkness claims you
These weights are to remain in place until I order them removed You will wear them at **all** times, without exception.
Do not fear this cup.
In this the pure elixir of the bramble-flower has been properly prepared. It is the Nectar of the Goddess and will fill you with her spirit.
It will bind you to us in body, mind and soul. Drink deeply, Daughter Oak.

CHAPTER IV

Though many months have passed, Ferin still burns with the **shame** of her capture. The memory is harsh and bright.
She was worth the wait, eh, father?
Aye. She'll be the perfect **bait** for O'Mah. The disgusting little pervert won't be able to resist accepting her, and once he does, he's ours to command
Gutless dogs!
Feqh!
Keep still, slut!
Son of a misbegotten bitch! The Sisterhood will have your balls for this, scumsuckers!
Then again, she'll be hard to keep quiet. Even with drugs
Aye. A problem easily solved. Pinch her nostrils and hold tightly
She'll be just as useful to us **without** a vicious tongue in her head

Ah, fallen into **sweet** reverie, have we?
O'Mah is a nightmare without end, without surcease
Once, when she was first given to him, she had the strength to fight
That strength is ng since gone

Pleh!
Feh! Your blood's no good anymore. It's gone all thin and watery. Eat your mush, or I'll beat you some more
Useless worthless
The blood must be **rich** It must be full and pure Red as liquid rubies
What are you doing here?!

I told you **no-one** is to come down here! Get her out!
Y yes, my Lord Prince! At once, my Lord!
You heard him! Get your fat carcass out of here and don't come back
Send a message to the **Priestess**. I am unable to penetrate the room. Nature of prisoner remains unknown. Warn her also that O'Mah's **instability** grows steadily **worse**.

CHAPTER
The training is intense and relentless.
Each day blends into another, a haze of new ordeals and trials
Every few days, I'm given another cup of the Nectar

The drug **attunes** us to one another We breathe in unison, our blood flows as one
I come to know them with senses beyond the physical To **feel** the essence of each individual behind the mask
Except for one--Daughter **Stone**. She holds herself apart from me behind a wall of coldness even the drug cannot penetrate I don't know why
Ah, they're finally taking off these damnable weights!
By the Goddess! My arms seem to float of their own accord I feel so **light**, as though no movement I make requires effort
What an amazing technique to retrain the very way in which muscles respond!

Now the training takes a new turn.
Agility and balance are stressed
The art of moving silently.
They begin to teach me the throwing stars and blowpipe and other specialized skills
For hours every day, Daughter Yew leads me through the labyrinth of tunnels, caves, passages, stairs and secret ways that honeycomb the island

Yew moves with complete sureness in the blackness.
I'm not yet at ease with sensing my way, but my perceptions improve with each new draught of the bramble-flower elixir
Yew reaches a listening alcove and warns me to be cautious. We must not make a sound
The acoustics from the room below are incredible. Every sound carries up with perfect clarity.
Ambyre, I can't put off choosing a new Princess any longer. I **must** have an answer!
I c-c-c-c-caaaaaaaaan't!
This is the **Queen's** chamber! Not even **she** is free of the Daughters' spying. No....of **our** spying. I can't excuse myself.

Shath's balls! Doesn't **anybody** around here want to be the goddess-damned Princess of Swords?
Oh, G-Gill, I c-can t' I just can't! You know I can't! I'm so sorry I'm so sorry
Now, now
Y-you must think I'm so aw-awful
Ambyre, you big blubbering whale, it's all right. You don't have to be Princess if you don't want to be. I can't **make** you
The problem is that you or Glespa are the only applicants I could present to the Houses that would satisfy **both** factions
I desperately need someone I can **trust**
Oh, give it up, Gill Can't you see it's a waste of time?

Couldn't **you** at least give it a try, Glespa?
Look, Gill, I've been hanging around here since that damned trial and already I feel like I've got bull-ants up my crotch! So no thanks
I intend to die in the field, in battle, with a bloody sword in my hand not over a desk full of parchment! The sooner I get back to Orange Phyrus, the better
Ambyre, can you at least agree to hold the post until I can call an election?
Oh, yes! As long as it's **temporary**
Sigh .I guess I should thank the Goddess for any small mercies she throws my way
You could always invite Vandalis back.
That **isn't** funny, Glespa

My Lady, First Commander Vandalis requests an audience with you.
Very well, Tuva. Admit her when I call
Hmmph. The mercies of the Goddess are very **small** today, indeed.
Should we
No. I'd like you to remain
Enter!

My Lady Queen
Commander Vandalis You may speak
As you may remember, I voluntarily resigned my title as Princess on the agreement that I could name my own field command I have come to name that command
Do you dare to dictate terms to your Queen?
Not at all I merely call upon my Queen to honor her word.
Name it, then
What I have to say would best be said in **private**
I'm not in the mood for games Request denied

Very well
I want command of Orange-Phyrus
Van, you fucking bitch--
Commander Glespa! You **forget** yourself
I beg my Queen's forgiveness
Vandalis, your audacity **astonishes** me
I remind my Queen that I wished to speak in private Certainly, I would not have come **now** had I known of Commander Glespa's presence
But it changes nothing I have named my price in the bargain

I can think of nothing I need less than having you in command there
My Lady, I am your loyal servant
The bargain was made and shall be honored You have command of Orange-Phyrus
Glespa, you expressed a desire to see action again You will assemble an army and investigate the barbarian threat from across the mountains
Vandalis, you will provide her with whatever she needs from Orange Phyrus

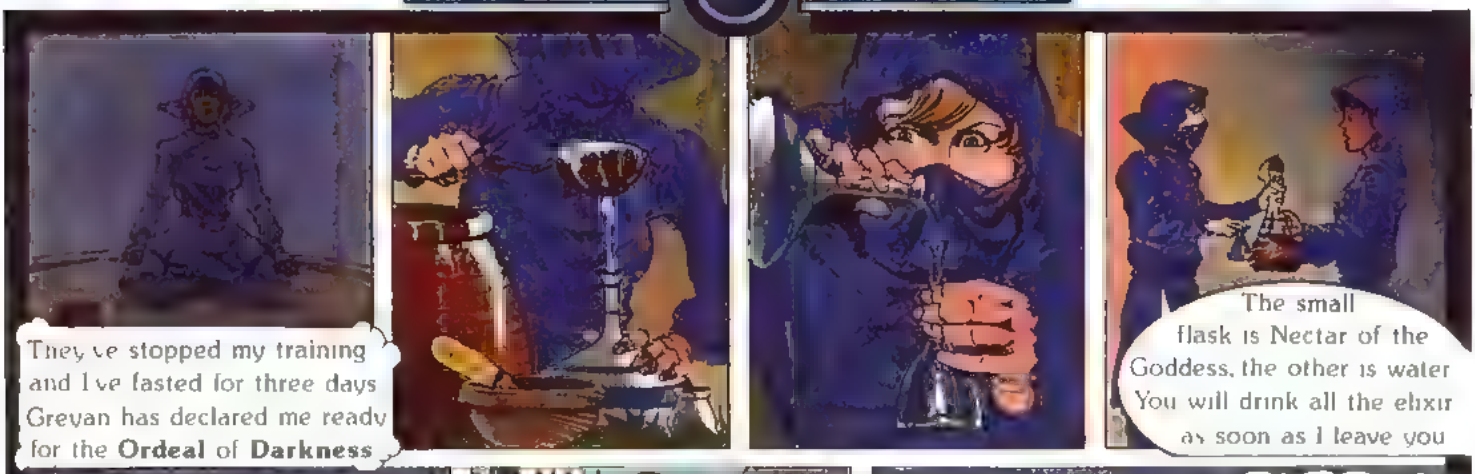
Yes, My Lady. With pleasure
You are all dismissed
Tuva!
Yes, My Lady?
One more thing, Vandalis You will return tomorrow to receive instructions as to my policies and goals for the situation in Orange
As you command, Lady Queen.
I have such a head ache
Get me a potion, would you?
Yew gestures for us to leave. This is news Greyan will want to hear at once

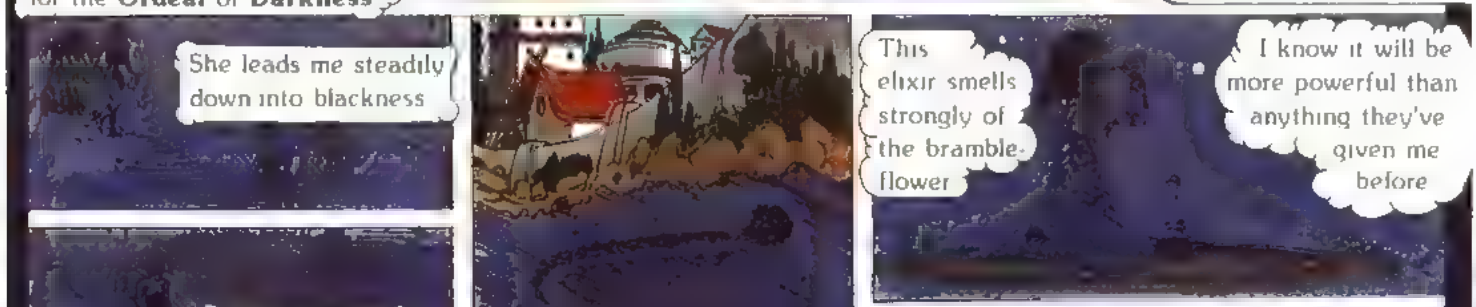
CHAPTER VI

Useless! Useless! You can't **scream** You can't **beg** I'm **bored** with you Bored! Bored! Bored!
I don't need you. I am a **God!**
Polippe, you will have this room bricked up **immediately**, from the **outside**
Yes, m'Lord
The men who brick it up are then to be **sacrificed** to my father, Brugha
Y your father?! The **god** Brugha?
I shall sit at my father's right hand when I **ascend** unto **godhood** and he shall be pleased that I have sent him new souls

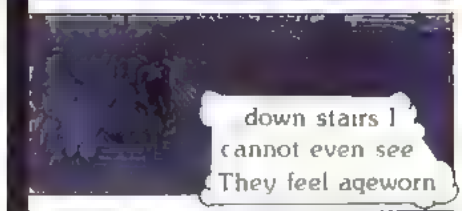
Now, for my Festival of Ascension, I want twelve **virgins** of noble blood And they **must** be virgins, Polippe Make sure of it! They must be **full-bodied** girls No skinny or pale girls
My Lord my Lord, I **beg** of you, the nobles will
They will dine with me before my Ascension and afterwards I shall **honor** them with
I want twelve virgins or I will have you **castrated**!
Yes, my Lord! Whatever my Lord wants, his servant shall obey!

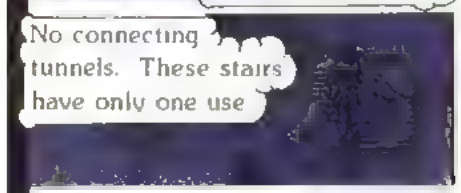
CHAPTER VII


They've stopped my training and I've fasted for three days Greyan has declared me ready for the **Ordeal** of **Darkness**
The small flask is Nectar of the Goddess, the other is water You will drink all the elixir as soon as I leave you

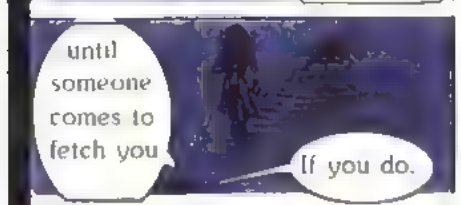

This elixir smells strongly of the bramble-flower
I know it will be more powerful than anything they've given me before

She leads me steadily down into blackness


down stairs I cannot even see They feel ageworn


No connecting tunnels. These stairs have only one use

You must not leave this room for any reason, Boronwe


until someone comes to fetch you
If you do,

you **fail** the Ordeal

I'm left in absolute darkness forced to feel for the flasks

It **rushes** over me, lifts me up and outward
...my spirit cannot be contained by the rock

.. instead, I **join** with the rock... I feel its great weight.... its ancient solidity ...the immense depth of it both pressing down and enveloping me.. I sense the secret places of the rock ..the hollows and tunnels and hidden ocean caves ...my roots go deep, deeper than the sea .I move outward and onward.... I am more. I am Ildana. I am her body. Upon me I feel the towers and palaces and barracks, thousands of feet scurrying about ...the ocean's eternal pounding **thrums** through my body
it is my pulse, the beat of my blood .
my body... .
my bod
my body
where am I?
I'm cold
Can't see
I'm alone
Deep in the ground
Wombtomb. My life dances brightly through my caveskull. Pinpoints of joy. Sweet apple friendship
Taut string pride

I want to be warm! I want light and sunshine! Goddess, let me be **free**! Let me touch the sun!
Ferin is only vaguely aware that O'Mah comes no more. There is no food or water. The cold stones numb her bones. For awhile, there were sounds outside the door, then these, too, were gone.
She feels death approaching at last and marvels that she has lived so long when she has wanted so much to die.
Always the fighter. Too stubborn to die. Too stupid to quit. Oh, Goddess, merciful Goddess, take my poor weak spirit
Lift me to the skies Let me taste the wind and see the sun one last time, Blessed Lady! Let me **die**, I **beg** you!

How can this be? Only seconds ago, I left my body and now I see Orange Phyrus ahead of me
Something's pulling me. Some kind of need, a **desperate** need akin to my own. I **must** go to it
Another spirit! A girl! Who is she? Why does she reach out to me?
Some kind of **barrier** between us
she **needs** me! Needs my will to live! I must reach her!
I must... I
Gaaaeeeagghhhh!

CHAPTER VIII

Let me return her to the Ordeal. Or let us be **done** with her. Did I not say to you, Greyan, that inducting her was a grievous mistake? She runs screaming from her inner fears and throws herself at your feet to beg your indulgence. She is not fit to be a Daughter, nor ever was.
Not so quickly, Stone. Have you forgotten Daughter Garnet's reports?
One of my operatives within the palace reported months ago that O'Mah had an unknown captive held in a room We believe this prisoner was brought to him by the Slavers. But that's all we've been able to learn. O'Mah has had the room guarded closely.
I shall ask the Goddess for guidance
Stone, you'll take a team to Orange immediately. Oak will go with you
Greyan, she's barely begun her training--
You will **stop questioning** my every order and **go**! I want that girl brought back **alive**!

CHAPTER IX

From twilight to midnight we've sailed with a good wind and have reached Orange in the quiet hours.
A mild draught of elixir is our final preparation Although the Priestess approved Stone's quick plan...
...I sure hope to hell I won't have to go through with **my** part of it

I'm convinced Stone concocted this plan to get rid of me. First Vandalis, now Stone. And to think I became a Daughter because I thought it would **solve** my problems!
Enough of this. Must concentrate
The royal Mausoleums of Orange are enormous Stone quickly leads us to the tomb of Danar.
Or rather, **one** of Danar's tombs, since many cities claim that honor I have no doubt Danar's bones truly rest somewhere at the bottom of the Danarian Sea

I am
I bid you welcome What is your mission?
Are you Garnet?
The grounds are filled with depraved worshippers and guards
We're here to free the prisoner in the room
Be warned! Tonight is O'Mah's Festival of Ascension
So your message advised us
I've taken it into account Oak will provide a diversion, if necessary
Lucky me

Never never did I imagine such a scene! Once, the worship of bloody Brugha was banned O'Mah's brought it back in full force Men and women run **naked** through the streets and grounds They are **drunk** and **wild** and full of unrestrained **lust**
Even O'Mah's own guards are wild-eyed
Garnet hands out crowbars It seems that the door was recently bricked up

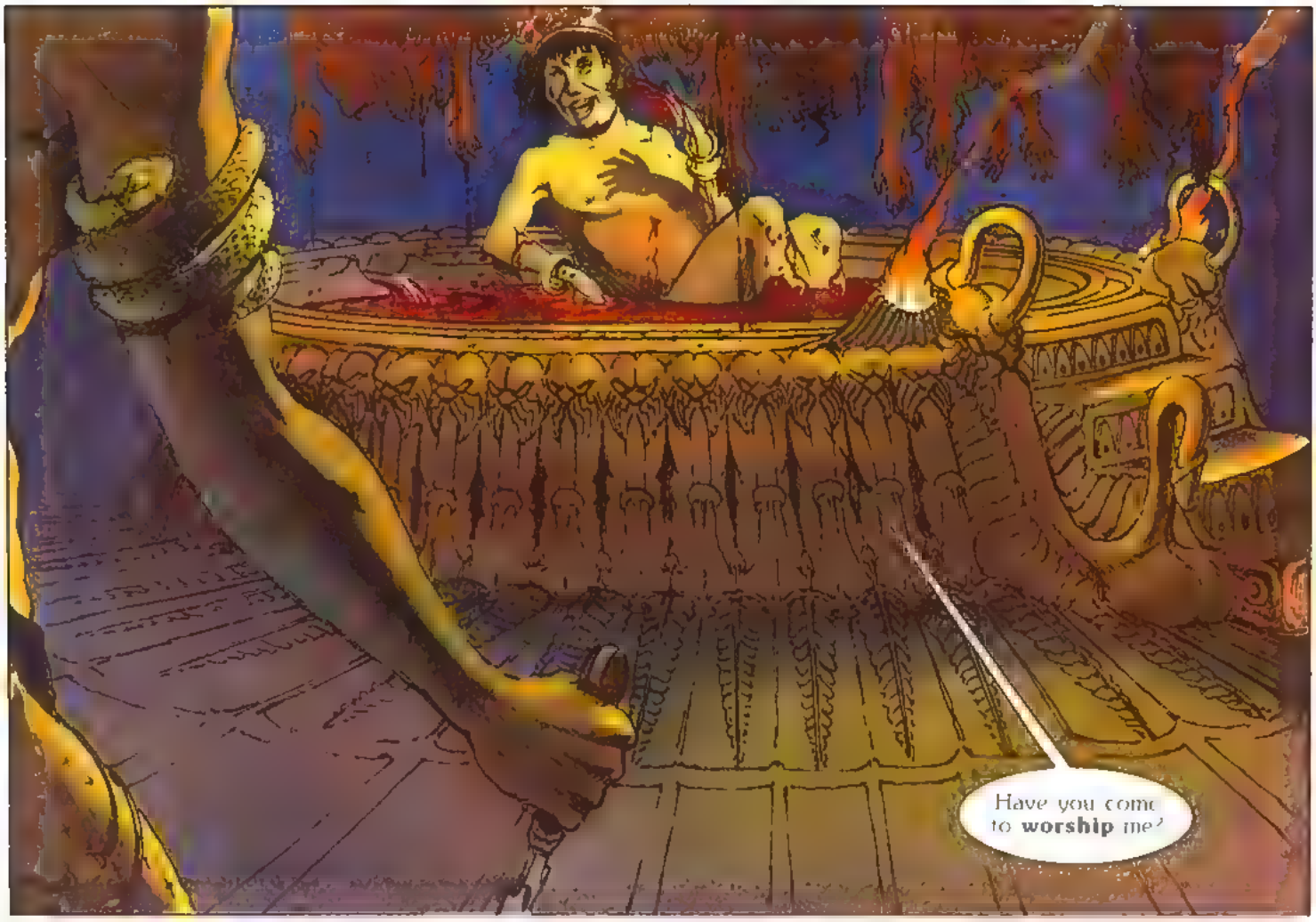
The guards screams are cut short by the swift action of the drug. In seconds, they fall
Shath s Teeth! The **stench** of human waste, blood, filth and decay rushes from the sealed room It's sickening!

Yes, that's the girl But we're too **late**!
Keep your voice down!
No, she **lives**, just barely Garnet, you'll carry her
Aye, gladly **Curse** that pig, O Mah! There's scarcely enough left of her to be a burden

There's a patrol comin'!
Oak, draw them away
You remember where to go?
I'll find it! Store

El's ran! Look at that!
Mmmm, hello, boys. Too **busy** to play?
Or are you simply **cowards**? Hahahahaha!
Not so fast, wench!
Aye, we'll show you where we keep our **courage**!

That was easy enough Now to find the gear I need
Damn! This doesn't look like the floor plan of the palace I studied O'Mah's had work done here!
What if Garnet's hidden caches of gear have been found? No, I don t dare even **think** it!
Where the hell am I? I've got to get out of here The balcony **has** to be somewhere nearby--
Ooouph! Watch out, you oaf!
Gau gau buh-buh-buh-guh-ahg-buh-buh---
Something down this corridor has reduced this man to a mindless wreck!
Another one! A courtier, by the look of him
Gaaaaaa gaaaaa .
There he goes, **screaming** as though all the demons of Kroastis were upon him!
Goddess have mercy


Have you come to **worship** me?

Am I not **glorious**?

Prince O'Mah mad utterly mad! He-he's **butchered** those poor girls like like sheep! Oh, you loathsome **monster!**
I'll **kill** you, you bastard, you monster, you freak!
But he's the Prince! I have **orders** my **duty** ,but how can I suffer him to live?
But to kill him, on my own without **sanction** but to let him live
Footsteps! Guards! Got to go!
Goddess, **forgive** me!
The balcony! Finally!

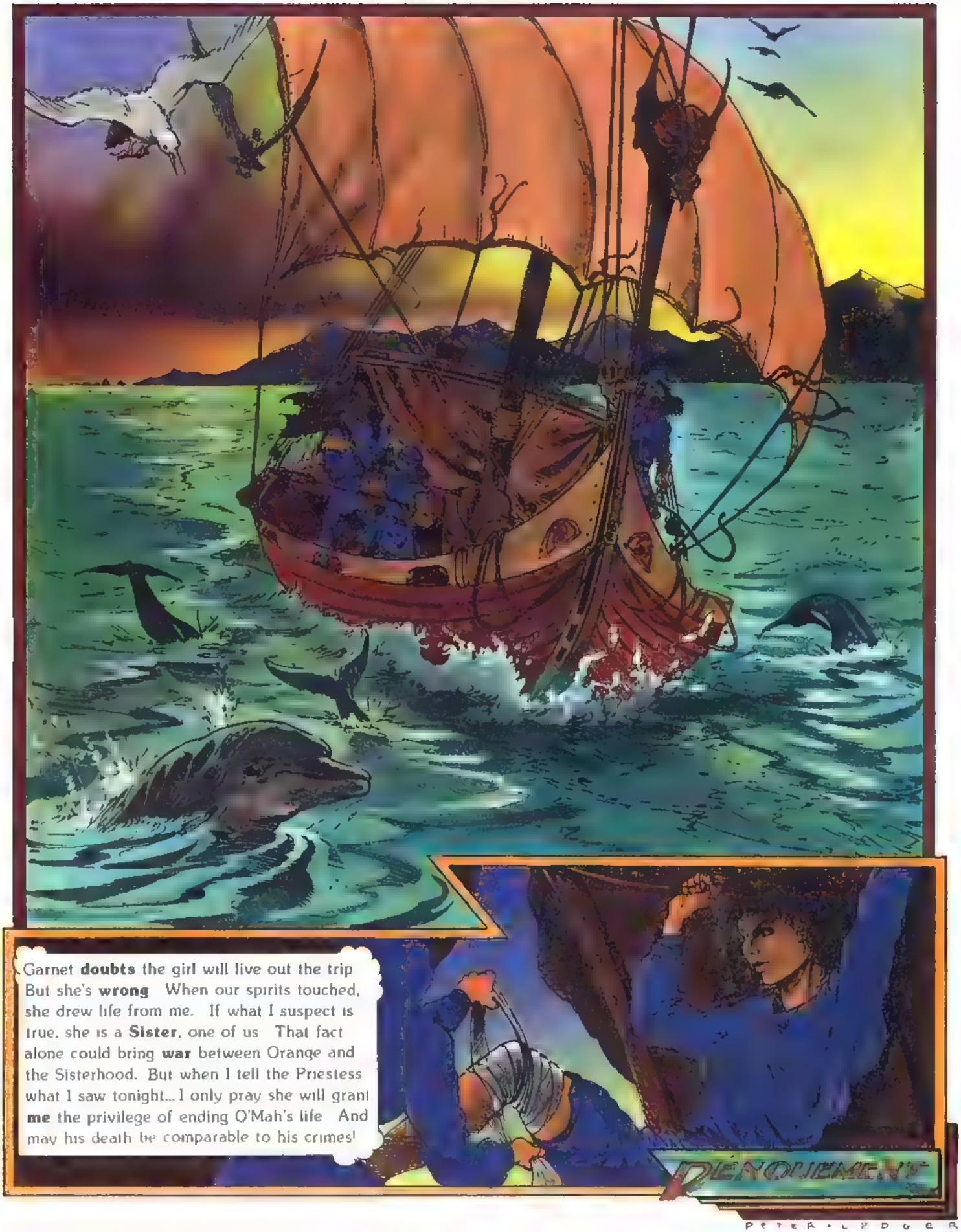
And the gear is in place!
I've lost too much time to meet the others at the tomb. I'll have to head straight for the dock
There's no hood! Damn, damn, damn my useless luck!
It's a major offense to be seen without a hood. If I'm caught, I'll have to commit suicide
No more time to look!
I hear voices coming this way!
I want out of this pit of murder and insanity!
CLINK!

An **intruder**! Sound the horns!
Get a squad out after him! And send some men to seal off this floor until we can clean up O'Mah's **mess**
By the Gods, there'll be **hell** to pay for this night!
Can hear a spear **whistling** toward me! Come on, Boronwe, run **Run**!

Cast off!
No!
Oak is not here!
Can't you hear the alarm horns? We cannot wait! Cast off!

The ship! **Leaving** without me!
A **plague** on you, Stone! You're not getting rid of me **that** easily!

Aaugh! My knee!
Shut up, you fool!
Where is your hood?
Gasp pant pant
When the Priestess hears how you've bungled this -
Let ...her hear! Let her . hear....how you tried to sail without me!
Get below


Garnet **doubts** the girl will live out the trip But she's **wrong** When our spirits touched, she drew life from me. If what I suspect is true, she is a **Sister**, one of us That fact alone could bring **war** between Orange and the Sisterhood. But when I tell the Priestess what I saw tonight... I only pray she will grant **me** the privilege of ending O'Mah's life And may his death be comparable to his crimes!
DENOUEMENT
PETER • LEDGER

MORE ABOUT THE SISTERHOOD

The island the Sisters call Ildana commands the narrow and vital Eastern Strait, the only passage between the open ocean and the huge, landlocked Danarian Sea. Ildana derives from Il-danar, an ancient word meaning roughly "heights of Danar." Danar was a legendary warrior and voyager for whom the Danarian Sea is named.

The Teeth of Shath are the remnants of a land bridge which collapsed in an earlier millenium, creating a treacherous and impassable barrier of jagged rocks and powerful currents.

For a long time, the island was held by a mongrel race of pirates who preyed upon all trading ships and demanded tribute to pass the island. They worshipped the Nameless God and his hell-hound, Shath.

The history of the Sisterhood began when a herbalist's daughter **ATALUMA,** was enslaved by one of the pirate-kings. She trained other captured women to extract poison from plants. Ataluma used guile and sex to foment a war between two factions of pirates, then her women poisoned all men who survived the war. She made the island a haven for women and, through harsh necessity, it eventually became the military force known as The Sisterhood of Steel.

The Slavers of Glaour, a large group of sea-faring men who deal in slaves, claim to be descendants of these pirates and rightful owners of the island.

Many generations later, The Sisterhood is ruled by the Matrix consisting of the Queen of Swords, the Princess of Swords, and the Priestess of Swords. They worship the Goddess, who has no name.

Though rarely recognized, there is a fourth woman of hierarchal power, the **MATRON,** who is responsible for all administrative work, for the treasury and payment of wages, for the balance of debts, for the supplies of food, clothing, boots, weapons, animals, crops, leather goods and the endless day-to-day, mundane necessities of running Ildana.

In addition, there are two other significant political bodies: the **HOUSE OF GOLD,** which is composed of senior officers permanently retired to the island; and the **HOUSE OF SILVER,** a rotating group of officers who are still in active service in the field.

Every year, teams of Sisters visit all parts of the known kingdoms on searches for suitable girl-children no older than 6. The girls must be healthy, of sound mind, and the parents willing to give them up, either for the hope of a better life, or in exchange for a reasonable amount of coin or other trade. The girls are brought to Ildana.

Discipline is enforced immediately. They are trained nearly every day of their lives in the skills of sword, longknife, dagger, shield, axe, spear, quarterstaff, horse and lance, shooting the bow, hand-to-hand combat, wrestling and many other disciplines. They are hardened in body with physical activities, games and competitions of all kinds. Lessons of loyalty and duty to the Sisterhood are repeated ceaselessly. They learn to read, write, and cipher. They study geography, history and military strategies.

There is perhaps no stronger bond within the Sisterhood than that of swordmates. They work together, play together, eat and bathe and sleep together. They are trained to fight as a team within the framework of a larger fighting body.

At the age of 17, a girl must prove her skills during the Week of Trials. Those who fail the Week of Trials are put into non-military service under the Matron as scribes, seamstresses, herders, cooks, leatherworkers, etc. Those who pass become Cadets and enter field service. Those who survive their first battles will be promoted to Warrior status. The military ranks are as follows: Warrior 4th to 1st Class; Captain 4th to 1st Class; Commander 4th to 1st Class; Princess; and Queen. The Princess and Queen are elected by the Houses of Gold and Silver.

The Daughters of Death operate outside the normal military organization and answer only to the Priestess, who chooses her own successor. Their most precious secret is that the blue-purple bramble-flower which is one of the symbols of the Sisterhood, is the source of their most potent drug, used to enhance perceptions, or if prepared differently, as an instantaneously lethal poison.

PETER LEDGER: ARTIST

An award-winning artist from Down Under. Born and raised in Sydney, Australia. Moved to Calif. in 1981. His life experiences and pursuits include: surveying, skiing, motorcycle racing, scuba diving, hot air ballooning, leatherworking, archery, hunting, hiking, weightlifting, gourmet cooking.

1967-78: Commercial artist in Sydney. One of the top airbrush artists.

1978-79: He worked for Marvel Comics and is renowned for his painting on the **WARRIORS OF THE SHADOW REALM** series.

1981: He was brought back to the States by Gary Kurtz (producer of STAR WARS) to hand-color a limited edition art book of Carl Barks' **THE BEST STORIES OF SCROOGE McDUCK.**

Since then, he has done movie posters, storyboards, logos, movie production design (aliens, robots, weapons, etc.) for **THE ICE PIRATES** and other films and jobs too numerous to mention.

In his spare time, he's working on a series of fine art prints based on the Rancho days of Spanish California.

CHRISTY MARX: WRITER

Grew up in Danville, IL. Moved to L.A. in 1971. I was once a Special Risk Underwriter in life insurance. Then I worked in all phases of tv and film production: legal, distribution, production, etc. Next, I became a full-time script reader for Orion Pictures and others. And finally, became a full-time writer.

Pursuits and pleasures: writing, reading, comic books, hiking, hunting, archery, motorcycles, photography, martial arts, skiing, scuba-diving, playing the Celtic Harp, collecting cats. My credits include:

FILM: **What Waits Below,** produced by Sandy Howard Prods.

TV (live-action): **Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future,** syndicated SF series.

TV (animation): **Spider-Man** (NBC), **Spider-Man** (syndicated), **Fantastic Four** (NBC), **G.I. Joe** (syndicated).

Developed **JEM** series (syndicated), story-editor second season, have written majority of episodes including original 5-part mini-series. Was rated #1 syndicated animation show for 1986.

COMICS: Conan and Red Sonja stories for **Savage Sword of Conan.**

MOONFIRE PRODUCTIONS

Peter Ledger and Christy Marx formed Moonfire Productions in 1981. We were married on Catalina Island in 1983.

We've produced a number of comic book stories together for Eclipse Comics.

CARLOS McLLYR THE CALIFORNIO was a 3-part adventure, a blend of history and fantasy set in 1840's Spanish California about the son of an Irish rover and a Spanish Don's daughter. We spent years researching so that every detail of the story would be historically accurate. It was originally published by Eclipse in its anthology magazine, Eclipse Monthly, issues #6, 7 and 8.

THE MONSTER OF PLANET OG was a parody of the wonderfully funky 1950's brand of science-fiction in which the hideous bug-eyed monster is forever making off with the beautiful earth woman. In "Planet Og" we reversed this scenario. It was published by Eclipse in Alien Encounters #2.

THE FIRST SISTERHOOD SERIES

My first notes on The Sisterhood of Steel are dated 9 June 1982. I worked my notes into a presentation, gave them to my comic book agent, Mike Friedrich, and we then set about finding an artist.

We found Mike Vosburg and with Mike committed to the project, we sold it to Epic Comics, a division of Marvel Comics.

The first issue of the Epic version of The Sisterhood of Steel came out in December 1984 in standard comic book format. There were eight issues, forming one long story beginning with Boronwë during the Week of Trials and ending with her on trial for treason.

After the Epic series ended, Mike went on to great demand as an animation storyboard artist and designer, and Peter gladly picked up the reins of the Sisterhood.

I also have a rather erratic but lively personal newsletter called Scrolls of the Sisterhood. When not discussing or answering questions about SOS, my subscribers and I cover such topics as obscenity, Freedom of Speech, censorship, sexual rights, music, animation, art, writing and cats.

We welcome and encourage you to **write** to us with your feelings and opinions about this Graphic Novel. In return, we'll send you information on Scrolls, the availability of back issues of the Epic Comic series of SOS and other items of possible interest.

The address is Moonfire, Box 1952, Wrightwood, CA 92397.

ILDANA

SCALE · 1 N·MILES

1 MILE

N

EASTERN STRAIT

DANARIAN SEA

NORTH WALL

OUTER SHIELD

INNER HARBOUR

PIRATES BEND

INNER SHIELD

WEST WALL

TRAINING HARBOUR

PARADE ROAD

LAKE OF THE BLESSED LADY

SEA WALL

THE OPEN SEA

BRIDGE OF THE HOUND

PARINTHA'S ISLE

GULF of SHATH

TEETH of SHATH

THE FANG

NORTH ARENA

SOUTH ARENA

ARMORY FIELD

L·E·G·E·N·D

1. ULME'S TOWER
2. PEAK OF THE FORGOTTEN ONES
3. FOREST
4. FIELDS & PASTURES
5. AMBUSH LAKE
6. PITY LAKE
7. MATRON'S HOUSE
8. MATRON'S COMPLEX
9. TEMPLE OF THE GODESS
10. PRIESTESS' COMPLEX
11. GARDEN OF DEATH
12. THE QUEEN'S ARENA
13. ATALUMA'S MARCH
14. PORT ADMINISTRATION MAIN DOCKS
15. PENINSULA PARK
16. HARBOUR FORTRESS
17. HARBOUR DISTRICT VISITORS' MARKET
18. QUEEN'S HOUSE
19. HALL OF JUSTICE
20. HOUSE OF GOLD
21. HOUSE OF SILVER
22. QUEEN'S PALACE, LIBRARIES
23. SENIOR & VISITING OFFICERS' QUARTERS
24. ARMOURIES
25. PRISON TOWERS
26. INSTRUCTORS' BARRACKS
27. HIPPODROME
28. STABLES
29. GIRLS' BARRACKS
30. MESS HALLS
31. TRAINING FIELDS
32. ZONA'S LOOKOUT

SURVEYED & DRAWN BY THE SISTERHOOD CORPS OF ENGINEERS AND CARTOGRAPHERS

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